

Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

BIB 532 Hermeneutics

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Summer 2006

Course Syllabus

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

“The student learns both principles and skills of interpreting scripture in terms of historical, social, and literary environments, and the process of applying the meaning to today’s needs. The history of hermeneutics is also covered. A special feature concentrates on Pentecostal issues.”

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Where does hermeneutics fit into the curriculum of theology? Traditionally, theology is divided into four divisions: exegetical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, and practical theology. Hermeneutics is a sub-division of the first category, exegetical theology. General hermeneutics consists of principles that apply to all languages and writing. Special hermeneutics consists of principles that apply to particular classes of writing (prophecy, allegory, parable, etc.). The goal of studying hermeneutics is to be able to interpret skillfully the meaning of any written text, and specifically the text of the Bible.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To understand how interpreters have worked in the past.
2. To understand and apply general and special interpretive principles.
3. To use tools available for interpretation skillfully and appropriately.
4. To interpret the Scriptures plausibly and persuasively.
5. To demonstrate an appreciation for the complexity of biblical interpretation and for the artistry of the biblical writings.

TEXTS:

- Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation. Revised and Updated*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003.
- Sire, James W. *Scripture Twisting: 20 Ways the Cults Misread the Bible*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980.
- Optional: Patzia, Arthur G. and Anthony J. Petrotta. *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- Optional: Soulen, Richard. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism, Third Edition. Revised and Expanded*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

BASIC OUTLINE:

1. We’ll read quickly through Sire’s *Scripture Twisting*.
2. Then we’ll move sequentially through *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, along the way skipping a few parts that are covered in other seminary courses: for example, the issue of canon. In other words, we’ll accept and follow our authors’ way of ordering the vast amount of material relevant to the hermeneutical task.

METHODOLOGY:

We will pursue the course objectives by:

1. Individual student reading, research, and writing.
2. Class lecture and discussion in order to:
 - a. Provide a framework for the textbook material
 - b. Clarify the textbook material
 - c. Explore some examples and issues not covered in the textbook
3. Preparing for and writing quizzes and two exams, which will test students' short-term and long-term retention and internalization of the material.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Read assigned pages in *Scripture Twisting* and *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* before class.
 - a. Note the author's main points.
 - b. Note the importance of these points for the task of interpretation.
 - c. Note other biblical passages which become clearer when one uses the principles being discussed.
2. Attend class regularly, since the lectures and discussions will complement the reading assignments. Your professor will follow the published attendance policies of the Seminary.
3. Note the schedule of assignments and exams. The final exam is on Friday, June 30.
4. Quizzes may be given at any time, and will be based on the assigned reading for that day.
5. Write two Comparative-Interpretive Analyses (C.I.A.'s). This project is described below. Due dates: **June 15** and **27**. Evaluation is based on:
 - a. Completeness and creativity in answering the four questions, that is, #1, #2, #3a, and #3b. Are you thinking with the author in the past and with your audience in the present?
 - b. Carefulness in evaluating how well the commentator did on the same term (T), relationship (R), and figurative expression (FE).
 - c. The student's understanding of the passage as a whole.
 - d. Neatness and clarity of form. The degree to which the student writer involves the reader in his/her analysis. Is there a growing awareness of the theological and ethical truths that need to be understood and lived?
 - e. Timeliness of completion. The grade will be lowered one letter grade per class day late.

6. Grading procedure:	CIA One	15%
	CIA Two	25%
	Midterm exam	20%
	Final exam	20%
	Quizzes and class	
	Participation	10%
	Supplementary	
	Reading	10%
		<hr/>
		100%

7. Read 300 pages from other hermeneutical texts. See attached bibliography and that of *IBI*, our textbook. Report your reading on the form provided.
8. I encourage students with disabilities, including invisible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, and attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, to discuss with me, after class or by phone, appropriate accommodations that might be helpful to them.

Comparative-Interpretive Analysis

A procedure for studying the textual content of the Bible.

1. Study carefully the assigned portion of the text. Look at it perceptively in the NIV, NRSV, or the NASV translations. **If you have Hebrew or Greek ability, you must use the original language text and appropriate original language tools.** Sometimes you may also want to look at a modern paraphrase. In the text of your Bible observe terms, relationships, and figurative expressions. For this project, define these words as follows:
 - a. Term=a word that has its customary, socially-acknowledged meaning in this particular passage (literal meaning). Choose any important word that meets this qualification.
 - b. Relationship=the precise way that words, phrases, and clauses are grammatically related to each other. How does our knowledge of relationships aid us to better understand the meaning?
 - c. Figurative expression=this kind of language involves the transfer of the literal, ordinary meaning from this sphere to another so as to convey by analogy or comparison a similar, deeper, or higher truth. There is a wide range here—simile, symbol, metaphor, over-statement, under-statement, etc.
2. SELECT THREE ITEMS in the assigned passage: one term to understand clearly the lexical meaning, one relationship for syntactical meaning, and one figurative expression for the meaning of a particular example of figurative language. If you cannot find an important word with a literal meaning, then you may choose two figurative expressions. Please indicate this at the beginning of your analysis.
3. TELL WHAT EACH ITEM MEANS by using the following procedure:
Note that meaning involves:
 - a. What the term, relationship, or figurative expression signified in its historical-literary setting. (Question 1 on the worksheet).
 - b. Value judgment of how important each term, relationship, or figurative expression was in the literary context. (Question 2 on the worksheet).
 - c. What each term, relationship, or figurative expression means for us today (1) in theology—what I should believe, (2) in ethics—how I should live. (Questions 3a and 3b on the worksheet).
4. **TYPE OUT** this worksheet **TO HAND IN** as noted on the schedule of assignments. Be sure to know your own reactions and interpretations **before** you look at your chosen commentator. This is what gives a sharp edge to comparative analysis. Sometimes you will say: “I am wrong; the commentator is right.” Other times you will say: “For these reasons I think I am right and he/she is wrong.” On some things you will regard yourself as partly right and partly wrong. If

the commentator says nothing, say “No comment.” Such white space is eloquent testimony to the incompleteness of commentaries!

Lay out your assignment in the following format:

Passage _____ Name _____

Comparative Interpretive Analysis

Your opening paragraph or two should locate your biblical paragraph in its circles of context. You do this by summarizing what the book is about, what the section is about, and what your paragraph is about. (Be aware that chapter breaks in English Bibles don’t always correspond to logical sections.)

I.

II.

Meaning for Student

Meaning for Commentator

Analyze one T, one R, and one FE in your chosen passage. You may use any Bible dictionary, commentary, grammar, lexicon, and concordance for help on meaning, grammar, or fig. language. Please indicate your source and your own judgment about the meaning. Use every exegetical aid that you know how to use.

In giving the commentator’s views on your chosen T, R, and FE, be sure to state why you agree or disagree with him/her. You should align the commentator’s views vertically on the page opposite your conclusions.

Meaning for Student

Meaning for Commentator

Term

- (1)
- (2)
- (3a)
- (3b)

Term

- (1)
- (2)
- (3a)
- (3b)

Relationship

- (1)
- (2)
- (3a)
- (3b)

Relationship

- (1)
- (2)
- (3a)
- (3b)

Figurative Expression

- (1)
- (2)
- (3a)
- (3b)

Figurative Expression

- (1)
- (2)
- (3a)
- (3b)

Your conclusion should summarize what your detailed analysis of one term, one relationship, and one figurative expression has added to your understanding of the paragraph in question.

Course Schedule for Summer 2006

		To be read for that day:
Jun. 5	Intro. and "Misreadings" 1 and 2	Sire: 7-39
Jun. 6	Misreadings 3 – 9	Sire: 40-74
Jun. 7	Misreadings 10 – 19	Sire: 75-125
Jun. 8	Misreading 20 and Conclusion	Sire: 127-154
Jun. 9	The Task, and Jewish Backgrounds	KBH: 3-31
Jun. 12	Early Christian Interpretation	KBH: 31-62
Jun. 13	The Meaning of "Meaning"	KBH: 169-209
Jun. 14	Chapel 12:30-1:40, Class resumes at 1:50-2:30: Context	KBH: 213-240
Jun. 15	First CIA is due. Words and Grammar	KBH: 240-272
Jun. 16	Poetry	KBH: 273-319; 351-359
Jun. 19	Midterm exam, first hour; Class resumes at 1:45. Narrative.	
Jun. 20	Narrative and Law	KBH: 323-351
Jun. 21	Prophecy	KBH: 359-387
Jun. 22	Wisdom	KBH: 387-398
Jun. 23	Gospels	KBH: 399-418
Jun. 26	Acts	KBH: 418-426
Jun. 27	Second CIA is due. Epistles.	KBH: 426-435
Jun. 28	Chapel 12:30-1:40, Class resumes at 1:50-2:30. Revelation.	KBH: 440-448
Jun. 29	Using the Bible Today	KBH: 451-504
Jun. 30	Final Exam (on material since the Midterm.)	

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